

Field Report

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park

■ 1.0 Summary

The Hopewell Culture National Historical Park is located in Ross County, Ohio near the city of Chillicothe, about 50 miles south of Columbus. The mission of this park is to preserve significant remnants of the Hopewell culture, a Native American culture that flourished between 200 B.C. and A.D. 500, and to educate others about the significance of the archeological resources and the need for their preservation. The Hopewell culture is characterized by the construction of major earthworks. The primary feature of this park from a transportation perspective is that it consists of five non-contiguous units scattered throughout Ross County. Each unit preserves a significant earthwork dating to the Hopewell. Linking these units will enable the park units to function more as a system than as isolated units.

Potential Alternative Transportation System (ATS) needs have been identified for this site as follows:

- Purchase one shuttle bus to be used for guided tours of the remote units of the park. This service would be based at the Mound City Group Unit where the Visitor Center is located. Two to three roundtrip tours could be scheduled a day. Tours would be scheduled according to the activities at the remote sites, such as active archeological digs. Not all of the sites need to have tours every day.
- Bikeway linkage improvements. Bicycles will become a viable transportation option for visiting the various units of the park as the regional bikeway network is developed. Creating linkages to this network will be an important way to encourage this alternative mode of transportation.
- Development of waterway access points such as boat ramps or docks. All five units of the park are on waterways, and could potentially be accessed by canoes or small boats.

■ 2.0 Background Information

2.1 Location

The Hopewell Culture National Historical Park is located in south central Ohio near Chillicothe, in Ross County. It is approximately 50 miles south of Columbus. The Mound

City Group Unit where the visitor center is located, is three miles north of downtown Chillicothe. The other units are scattered throughout Ross County.

2.2 Administration and Classification

The Mound City Group Unit of the park, site of the Visitor Center, was transferred from the War Department to the NPS in 1923. The War Department operated a large army base (Camp Sherman) just north of Chillicothe. After World War I, the Department decommissioned the camp and transferred parcels to other government agencies, including a Veterans' Administration Hospital and a Federal Prison. Although the NPS has managed the site since 1946, it was not until the 1960s that the Visitor Center was built.

Currently, this National Park comprised five units: the original parcel from Camp Sherman, and four other sites that have been purchased, are being purchased, or to which the NPS has easements or use agreements. These four additional units were added to the park on May 27, 1992.

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park is managed by the U.S. NPS. The park superintendent is John Neal, and the maintenance supervisor is Jon Casson.

2.3 Physical Description

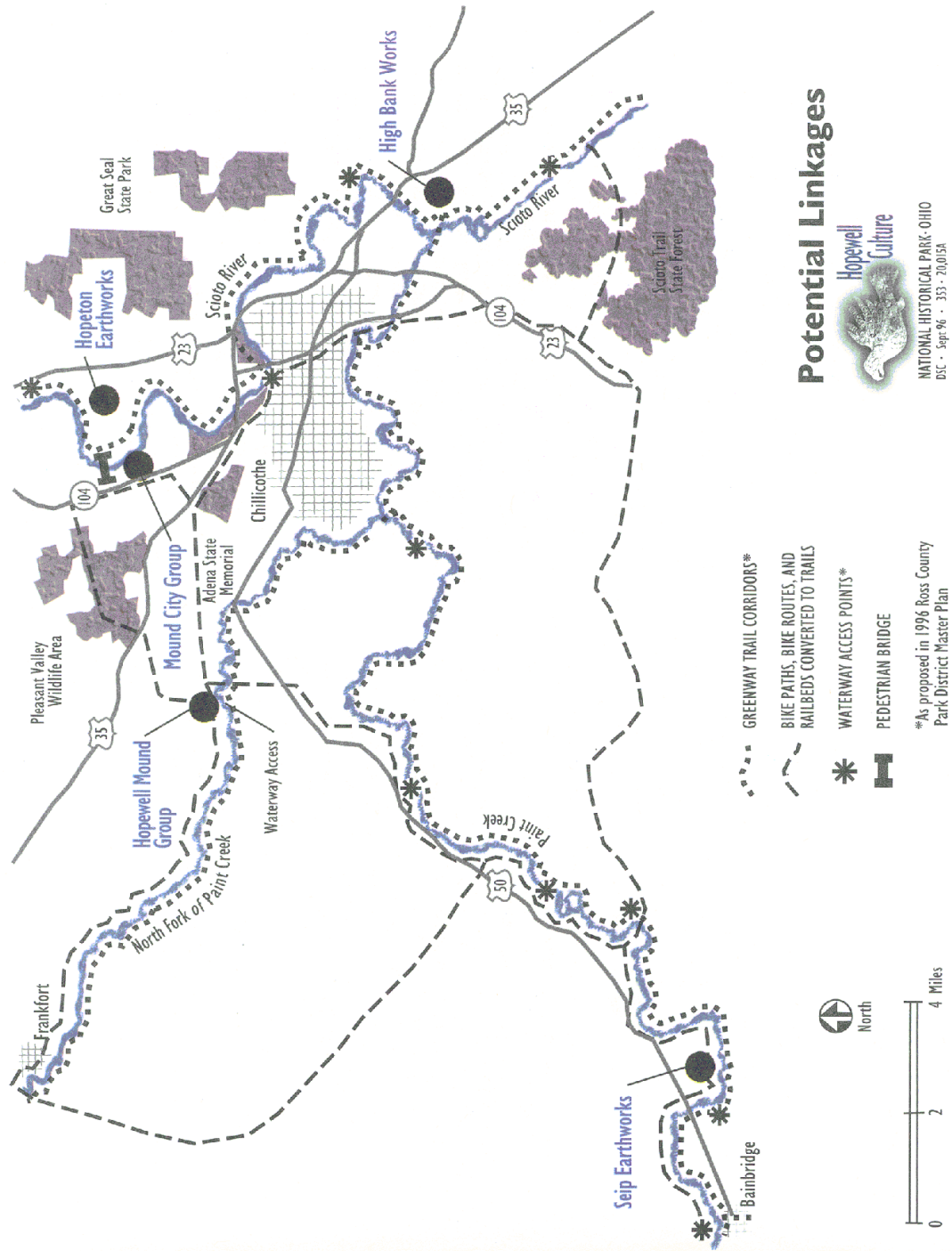
Hopewell Culture National Historical Park consists of five units scattered around the Chillicothe, Ohio area. Each unit preserves one or more earthworks from the Hopewell Culture, a native American culture that flourished between 200 BC and AD 500. The total acreage of all five units is 1,134 acres. The five units are: Mound City Group, Hopeton Earthworks, Hopewell Mound Group, Seip Earthworks, and High Banks Works. See Figure 1 for the locations and potential linkages of the five units.

Visitors are encouraged to visit three units Mound City Group, Seip Earthworks (only the part presently owned by the Ohio Historical Society), and when it is developed, Hopewell Mound Group. The other two units, Hopeton Earthworks and High Bank Works, offer limited access to visitors and are devoted primarily to preservation and research.

The main unit of the park is the Mound City Group Unit which is about three miles north of downtown Chillicothe, just off State Route 104. This unit contains about 120 acres, and includes the main visitor center and a public parking lot for approximately 20 cars. There is no specific bus parking, but the lot is rarely full during the off season, November-March, except on weekends and during holiday periods. So buses use multiple car spaces while their passengers are visiting the park. Also located at this unit are the park headquarters and the maintenance facility.

The Hopeton Earthworks Unit covers 292 acres and is about one mile east of the Mound City Group Unit, across the Scioto River. However, there is no direct link between these

Figure 1. Potential Linkages



two units at this time. Access to the Hopeton Earthworks Unit is off Route 23, about two miles north of U.S. Route 35. The driving distance between this unit and the Mound City Group Unit is approximately four miles. This unit is currently an archeological research facility. It is not developed for general visitor use, but ranger-guided tours to this unit are scheduled periodically. Long-term proposals for linking this unit to the Mound City Group Unit includes installing a pedestrian bridge across the Scioto River between the units.

The Hopewell Mound Group Unit is a 300-acre unit that is located on Sulphur Lick Road, north of U.S. Route 50, about five miles southwest of the Mound City Group Unit. This unit is not currently developed for visitor use, but visitor use and interpretation will be heavily emphasized at this unit in the future. The park plans to construct elevated over-looks from which visitors will be able to get a sense of the expansiveness of this earthworks.

The Seip Earthworks Unit is about 17 miles southwest of the Mound City Group Unit on U.S. Route 50. This unit covers 236 acres, most in private ownership. Currently, there is an Ohio Department of Transportation rest area with picnic facilities and restrooms on the northern part of the unit. The Ohio Historical Society maintains an interpretive exhibit at this unit. This unit has the potential for very heavy visitation.

The High Bank Works Unit is about eight miles south of the Mound City Group Unit along the Scioto River. This is a 197-acre unit which is still partially in private ownership. Three sets of railroad tracks pass through the site. Because of its current ownership and the difficulty in accessing the site, the park does not plan to make this unit accessible to the general public. This unit will primarily be maintained as an archeological research site. Ranger-guided tours to this unit are scheduled periodically.

2.4 Mission and Goals of the National Historical Park

As described in the park's general management plan, the parks mission is: "to protect the prehistoric remains of a dynamic, social, and ceremonial phenomenon that flourished in the woodlands of eastern North America long before Europeans first landed on this continent." As a part of this mission, the park serves as a focus for research on Hopewell culture. Another part of this mission is to educate the public about the daily lives, contributions, perceived values, and interactions of the Hopewell people with other peoples and the environment around them.

In addition to these goals, the park staff have become increasingly aware of the park's recreational potential within the context of the entire county's park development plans. Therefore, they have informally added recreation to their mission, including hiking, biking, boating, and maintaining athletic fields.

2.5 Visitation Levels and Visitor Profile

In 1994 the visitor center counted 37,000 visitors. The park staff indicated that visitation has been stable over the last decade. Normal peak day visitation is approximately 200 visitors. Peak visitation is during the summer months, with many school groups visiting during May and October.

Park staff estimate that 80 percent of the visitors are from the local or regional areas within a three-hour drive from the park. Approximately 20 percent of visitors are from outside Ohio. The average length of stay at the park is 45 minutes.

According to a 1998 visitor survey, 98 percent of the visitors to the park were satisfied overall with appropriate facilities, services, and recreational opportunities.

■ 3.0 Existing Conditions, Issues and Concerns

3.1 Transportation Conditions, Issues and Concerns

The central transportation issue for this park is how to link the five non-contiguous units. There are no specific traffic or parking congestion issues. The park staff has identified four projects to address this central issue: bikeways, shuttle services, roadways, and waterways.

Bikeways

The NPS and the Ross County Park District have identified a network of corridors where bike paths could be developed. These bikeways would connect all five park sites. They would be owned and maintained by the Ross County Park District. The NPS has agreed to develop bike paths on its property that connect with the regional network (refer to the map in the general management plan that outlines the “Potential Linkages”).

Shuttle Service

On a few occasions the NPS has contracted with a transportation provider for bus tours to some of the remote units. These tours were specially described by park staff to provide an educational tour of an archeological dig. These tours have been very popular, and the park staff expects heavy visitor use of these tours if the tours were scheduled regularly. It is anticipated that only one vehicle schedule for two or three tours a day, would be necessary.

These shuttles would provide access to the remote units as two units have significant constraints to public accessibility (Hopeton Earthworks and High Bank Works), and one unit is far away enough that visitors might not otherwise make the trip (Seip Earthworks).

Roadway Improvements

Roadway improvement plans potentially affecting the park are a major priority of both Park and County officials. These plans include the reconstruction of U.S. Route 104, and the construction of the Ross County Fairgrounds connector road and bridge. Both of these projects would include bicycle paths. The connector road would also significantly reduce the driving distance between the Mound City Group Unit and the Hopeton Earthworks Unit.

Water Transportation

Since all of the park's units are located on rivers or creeks there is potential water access. At a minimum, the park staff would like to see docks and or boat ramps installed at some of the units. Another possibility would be to link the Mound City Group site and the Hopeton Earthworks site via a ferry across the Scioto River.

3.2 Community Development Conditions, Issues and Concerns

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park is located in Ross County, Ohio. The park is viewed as a cultural and recreational asset to the community. However, with its relatively low visitation, it is not considered an economic generator in the region. There is significant industry throughout Ross County, including truck manufacturing, gravel excavation, and animal feed processing, as well as two large prison operations. In light of these industries, the park does not play a major role in the local economy.

The County is experiencing continued suburban and exurban development, with 10,000 new housing units forecast between 1995 and 2004. This new development is creating a double-edged challenge for the park. On the one hand this development is heightening the need for the preservation of open space, especially land that may contain additional Hopewell Culture artifacts and structures. On the other hand, the increasing population means that there is increasing demand for open space and recreational facilities. Alternative transportation facilities and services will greatly aid the park in meeting these new demands.

3.3 Natural or Cultural Resource Conditions, Issues and Concerns

The park has been successful in preserving earthworks and artifacts of the Hopewell culture. The park is also working to preserve the natural resources of the area because it is essential to view the Hopewell culture within the natural environment in which it developed. There are no known threatened or endangered species within the sites.

3.4 Recreation Conditions, Issues and Concerns

Currently the recreational activities at the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park include visiting the interpretive center at the Mound City Group Unit, touring archeological sites, hiking on trails, and picnicking. The park, in conjunction with the Ross County

Parks District has plans to create an extensive network of hiking and bicycling trails to connect the five units of the park, and to develop athletic fields at the Hopewell Mound unit. The NPS is also working with Ross County Parks District to develop waterway access points (e.g., docks or boat ramps) at some of the park units. All five units are on rivers or creeks.

■ 4.0 Planning and Coordination

4.1 Unit Plans

The park's General Management Plan, adopted in 1997, identifies the goal of linking for the different units of the park by a network of bike paths, canoe routes, and shuttle services. Linking the units will increase visitors' options for taking different modes of travel between the units. These linkages will enable the park units to function more as a system than as isolated units. (See Figure 1 for an illustration of potential linkages.)

4.2 Public and Agency Coordination

The NPS operates and maintains the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, but works closely with other agencies, organizations, and native American tribes that have interests in or impacts on the park. These include:

- The Archeological Conservancy;
- The Ohio Historical Society;
- The Ohio Department of Natural Resources;
- The Ohio Archeological Council;
- The Ohio Parks and Recreation Association;
- The Ross-Chillicothe Convention and Visitor's Bureau;
- The Chillicothe-Ross Chamber of Commerce;
- The Ross County Park District;
- The City of Chillicothe;
- The Adena State Memorial;
- The Scioto Society;
- The Ross County Historical Society; and
- Tri-County Triangle Trails, Inc.

Native American tribes that have association with the park, and that have participated in the park's development, include: the Loyal Shawnee, Eastern Shawnee, Absentee-Shawnee, Miami, Wyandotte, Eastern Delaware and Western Delaware.

■ 5.0 Assessment of Need

5.1 Magnitude of Need

Alternative transportation can play a role in increasing the usage and accessibility of the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park. Through their planning efforts, the park staff has identified a number of transportation needs that they would like to address in the coming years. These include:

- Shuttle bus service to connect all units of the park, especially with guided interpretation;
- Bicycle path linkages on park property to the regional bike network;
- Roadway improvements that include bike paths; and
- Water access points for canoes and small boats.

5.2 Feasible Alternatives

Feasible transportation alternatives that could address the needs of the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, and that fall within the definition of ATS in this study include:

- Purchase one shuttle bus to be used for guided tours of the remote units of the park. This service would be based at the Mound City Group Unit where the visitor center is located. Two to three roundtrip tours could be scheduled a day. Tours would be scheduled according to the activities at the remote sites, such as active archeological research. Not all of the sites need to have daily tours.
- Bikeway linkage improvements. Bicycles will become a viable transportation option for visiting the various units of the park as the regional bikeway network is developed. Creating linkages to this network will be an important way to encourage this alternative mode of transportation.
- Development of waterway access points such as boat ramps or docks. All five units of the park are on waterways, and could potentially be accessed by canoes or small boats.

■ 6.0 Bibliography

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park General Management Plan, April 1997.

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park Long-Range Interpretive Plan, September 1997.

Strategic Plan for Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, FY1998 through FY2002.

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Tri-County Triangle Trail Plan, Edsall & Associates.

<http://users.aol.com/tricotrail/>.

■ 7.0 Persons Interviewed